

No mistaking welcome by students: Teacher

As I came home to my apartment building the other evening, the "Welcome Back . . ." picture on your front page was lying outside every closed door on the corridor.

And this, for me as a teacher, was the true message on the first day back!

We may feel bitter about our treatment by every level of government, the mass media and the general public, but there was no mistaking the students' welcome. I wouldn't have believed that I could feel glad and proud to be a teacher again.

Would that the rest of Toronto and Canada would give us the appreciation and respect that our students still seem ready to do?

MARY WENTZ
Westview Centennial
Secondary School
North York

talling 85 students, only nine were willing to come in after school.

In one class only one student volunteered and in another not even one would make that commitment to his or her own education.

DAVID BLATMAN
Georges Vanier Secondary School
North York

Teachers were congenial, dedicated

I am a Grade 10 student at Stephen Leacock Collegiate.

On Jan. 19 you printed a story on the front page stating that the teachers had bitter feelings while going back to school.

I went to school that day and found them to be the exact opposite. They were fair, congenial and dedicated to their work, as always.

I feel that your statement was unjust.

Top athletes are springing into action...spreading the word

To judge from the crowd response, it could have been the National Basketball Association finals as two teams of husky young men gave it all they had — but passes went astray, shots were blocked and they scored only 19 points.

It was basketball all right — Canadian Football League style. The program is called Athletes in Action and the message is simple: Sports and religion can go together.

Before yesterday's game, the spectators, about 500 students at **Westview Centennial** Secondary School in North York, heard CFL stars Peter Muller and Bob Swift tell of their conversion to Christianity.

Swift, a centre with Winnipeg Blue Bombers, said he was "into the drug thing, booze and everything else" before he was persuaded to attend a conference of Athletes in Action in Chicago three years ago.

Muller, of the Toronto Argonauts, and Charlie Collins,

of the Saskatchewan Roughriders, teamed up with Swift to take on three of the top athletes at Westview in the basketball game.

The students won the game 6-4 and finished with an overall edge in a series of five events: Volleyball, tug-of-war, sit-ups, basketball and a football relay race.

Muller, Swift and Collins are visiting three schools a day as part of Toronto Pro Week, an effort by professional athletes to spread the word.

The week will conclude with a flag football game Friday at 8 p.m. in CNE Stadium between players from the CFL and the National Football League.

Athletes in Action began in the United States and has spread to Canada in recent years.

All CFL teams except Hamilton now have a chaplain and the Tiger-Cats will have one this year, Collins said in an interview.

Students oppose more high rises

By JONATHAN FEAR

Students expressed the loudest opposition last night as North York's planning board heard nothing but objections to six proposed high-rise apartment buildings and a shopping plaza on Finch Avenue between Jane Street and Highway 400.

"I'm talking for the youth of this area," shouted Frank Vilardo to hoots and whistles from friends he called his little army.

He said they didn't need a shopping plaza. "What we need is recreation centres."

The development proposed by Elderbrook Investments

Ltd. and Del Zotto Enterprises Ltd. would include three 29-story and three 26-story apartment buildings and have 1,296 two- and three-bedroom units.

Residents are complaining that the population in the area is already too high, there are too many high-rises and that the area lacks adequate recreation space.

Students, urged by their teachers to attend the meeting, complained that their schools are already overcrowded.

Jean Pike, a student at Westview Centennial Second-

ary School where the meeting was held, said she was unable to choose courses she wanted because of the number of students.

Other students said it was so crowded the school had six lunch periods and it often was impossible to move in the halls between classes.

The site is in the borough's most populated ward where many of about 50,000 residents are living in high-rise buildings.

The planning board, which must approve a zoning change before the development can go through, may make a decision next Wednesday.



TRUMPETER Don Johnson (left) took one of Humber College's top bands through its paces this week in preparation for finals of annual Canadian Stage Band

Festival at Seneca College tonight. A stage band, as bandleader Woody Herman recently pointed out, is nothing more "than a big band located in a school.

And these big bands are developing there because a lot of the teachers are musicians from the big band era." Professionalism is the key to this new interest.

The college band boom goes on

By PETER GODDARD
Star staff writer

Rob McConnell was flustered. The usually unflappable leader of that classy big band, Boss Brass, had no sooner looked down from the stage during his group's show last Monday night at the Colonial than he was confronted with the unnerving sight of another big band staring back up at him.

It was one of Humber College's five youthful stage bands. But what bothered McConnell was the realization that he was about to ask his seasoned professional group to play composer Ron Collier's Humber Suite, a piece the college band could probably play better.

Polished band

"I know you Humber guys have been practicing this for weeks," McConnell said uneasily. "So just remember my band started learning it only a day ago."

McConnell's respect for the college group is understandable. This romping, polished band is one of two from Humber College that will compete in the finals of the third annual Canadian Stage Band Festival at Seneca College tonight.

With bands coming from as far as Edmonton, Alta., and Truro, N.S., the festival is a reflection of the phenomenal interest in jazz-oriented stage bands. There are an estimated 450 active bands in high schools, colleges and universities across the country.

A stage band, as bandleader Woody Herman recently pointed out, is nothing more "than a big band located in a school. And these big bands are developing there because a lot of the teach-

ers are musicians from the big band era."

Humber College's top two bands, for instance, are led by trumpeter Don Johnson, who also heads the Hook and Ladder club's house band, and Ron Collier, the composer-arranger who has written extensively for the late Duke Ellington's band.

But it isn't all nostalgia for the big band era that's behind the upsurge in stage bands. According to singer Bob Eberly, in town last Saturday with the Jimmy Dorsey band, "Nostalgia is keeping the old big band in business."

And it's this nostalgia that the promoters of "big band month" at the International Centre on Airport Rd. are banking on to attract crowds to hear the Duke Ellington band, the Tommy Dorsey band, and Moxie Whitney scheduled throughout this month.

"Yet it's the kids themselves who are creating interest in the new big bands and stage bands," said Don Johnson. "They want something more than rock. When they finish Humber College's three-year music course, they want to become professional musicians."

Professionalism is the key to the rise in interest in big bands, dance bands and stage bands. Rock was—and is—amateur music. This is its greatest virtue. At its best, it's fresh, new, and completely unfettered. It depends less on training than on instinct. And the only schooling the rock musician has ever needed was based on knowing something of the world around him and something of himself.

Significantly, when rock players started seeing themselves as professional musicians as well as professional prophets, they started borrowing elements from jazz. This was in the mid and late '60s, when bands like

Blood, Sweat and Tears, Chicago, and Chase used brass and reed sections in a musical blend often called "jazz-rock."

"So for a person trying to become a professional musician rock can be very limiting," said Elmers Sernudis, a 24-year-old bass trombonist going into his third year at Humber College. "It's a monotonous musical form. Besides, it destroys your technique, while a stage band expands your technique."

Technique is the magic word for the young stage band players. Herbie Koffman, the 20-year-old trumpet-playing son of Moe Koffman, once took two months to transcribe a single Guido Basso solo in order to play it as part of his duties with Ron Collier's band at Humber College.

"And he copied that solo so well," said Rob McConnell, "that some guys have bet Guido \$100 that even he can't play it anymore."

New tricks

So when an established big band like Maynard Ferguson's, or Buddy Rich's comes to town with its full complement of technical wizards, the audience is filled with local stage band players discovering new tricks.

Established big band leaders are aware of their influence. "I'm in the position now to help a whole lot of people," Stan Kenton said recently. "To help them clean up a whole lot of confusion in music education."

Kenton will be giving a stage band seminar on the campus of York University from July 18 to 19. And he is only one of the many big band players, such as trumpeter Clarke Terry and trombonist Ernie Green, who spend much of their year teaching. But even musicians who don't actively teach are aware of their influ-

ence. "All the kids are beginning to dig big bands now," said Count Basie.

Established educational institutions are becoming less suspicious of jazz and are encouraging stage bands. "After all, stage bands are only continuations of the wind band tradition in schools," said Bob Witmer of York University's music department, which has several jazz groups but no stage band at the moment.

"It's the meeting of urban popular culture with the wind band, march-band tradition in an educational context."

According to Paul Miner, a music teacher at Westview Centennial Collegiate in North York and one of the organizers behind tonight's Stage Band Festival: "The so-called legitimate musicians are coming around to see the need for stage bands. They see the stage band as a good educational medium."

Phil Nimmons, the veteran Toronto big band leader who currently heads the jazz ensemble at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, finds his students more eager to try out new musical experiences—experiences only a jazz-oriented band can offer.

"A few years ago kids were locked into the rock pattern. They couldn't see anything else. But now they realize there's something more, that not everyone is going to be an overnight sensation, that you have to pay your dues as a musician," he said.

It's to encourage this sense of competition that the Stage Band Festival was set up. In the past few months several preliminary competitions have been held across Canada, with a total of 50 stage bands competing. And the winners of tonight's finals will receive a total of \$4,000 in prize money donated by McDonald's Restaurants of Canada.